



# INDEXA

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worldwide peace, and friendship

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## ***Nauru 2012 (C21HA)—Out of the Way Island that's Really Way Out!***

***By "Pista" Gaspar (HA5AO) and George Kovacs (HA5UK)***

**E**arly 2011 (after our successful YJ0HA-Vanuatu trip) we decided to strike the chords again and after some research voted for another Pacific tour in autumn with a target this time of *Tuvalu, Banaba, West Kiribati* and *Fiji* with primary focus on the first two. Lots of investigation led us to understand that landing at *Banaba* is not an ordinary issue—we would have to hold the landing permission of 'The

Council of Elders' besides the allowance of Kiribati Government. This 'Council' (they live far from Banaba) was difficult to connect with so we ran out of time when finally they accepted our plan, so we had to postpone the trip to next January. Meanwhile we encountered some other troubles. The air flight between Fiji and Tarawa was temporarily suspended and the nationwide freshwater crisis on Tuvalu resulted in an extreme limitation on checked baggage and moved water to being a top priority cargo on the planes. That would not have made any sense to go to Tuvalu as the only target with an allowance of only a carry-on package. We are considered as "backpackers" compared to the huge DXpeditions, but with that light setup limited to a total of 30 kg we couldn't get close to our goal.

While there wasn't any 'B plan' yet, we didn't want to cancel or postpone our trip again. We had prepared and set our personal life for being off for a month and decided to change our destination all of a sudden.

Thus we voted on Nauru, marked as one of the most wanted places in the Central Pacific by DXCC wish-lists (far better ranked than Tuvalu or Kiribati as it turns out). A new battle began: we had to get air tickets in a very short time. Nauru has its own airline being not part of One World, nor any other airline alliances, which means no contact to any agency, thus one has to buy and pay for a ticket (if there are any) right online without any reservation or booking possibility. All visitors to Nauru have to hold visas to get their air ticket. The visa moreover is tied to having a valid air ticket and confirmed accommodation booking. Tricky, isn't it? [That is like the "Catch-22"](#).

It took us weeks of investigation to gain a useful contact on the visa issue which was very hard to come by. It seemed we weren't going to meet all our requirements within our limited time, when—just like in a fairy tale—we found a very helpful lady at UK Honorary Consulate who helped us to break this vicious circle.

So we were ready and happy to set off on 6th of January with some 60kg of baggage, including a long ski-bag holding poles, antenna accessories and all other things we just crammed into that. Surprisingly, at the Budapest Airport they found it not only oversized but also over the weight limit according to the airline regulation

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**Inside. . . . Meet many of your directors and a long standing INDEXA member.**

## Nauru 2012 (C21HA)—Out of the Way Island that's Really Way Out! (Con'd)

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from Frankfurt to Brisbane. No mercy—we had to get rid of most of our personal belongings in order to keep all our radio stuff with us. We replaced our non-radio needs again in Brisbane after 40 hours of flying (including transfer delays in Frankfurt and Hong Kong).

In Brisbane, bad surprises shocked us when we checked the ski-bag, found it open and the SteppIR EHU—the housing and stepper motor of the vertical—was missing. Our claim was not effective, only a record was drawn. The flight took us another 6



Nauru from a high altitude.

hours from Australia to land in Nauru with a stop-over in the Solomon Islands.

Nauru (named *Pleasant Island* by the first European whaler) is the smallest republic in the world consisting of a sole island of 21 square km, and the second least populated entity with some 9000 residents (including foreign workers). Besides, I think it's the strangest place I've ever been or ever will be. It's history and presence—including geography, economy, sociology, or just its life-style—strangely impressive, but it's not part of this article, since more space is needed than is available here. Briefly: It was a real Pacific paradise 100 years ago with reasonable population who maintained themselves strictly using the resources available on their island.

Then one found the island the richest land in *phosphate*. Mining begun and changed all and everything. Meanwhile, they got independence, and during the last four decades, they were the *richest* then became the *poorest* branch in the world. Today, no one can tell their future, but it does not seem like a prosperous one. . .

There are two hotels in Nauru. Both are pretty old from the 'golden age of sixties'. They don't count on tourists as there is no tourism at all. One of the ho-

tels is on the west; the other is on the south-east coast. While the hardest job is to reach *Europe* from there, so the most important argument was to consider the signal take off. During November and December we found that most stations from Zone 31 and 32 came from long path. Also in January the southern hemisphere of the globe exposed all day by sun, while north part of the globe is in winter darkness. Longpath seemed of benefit for 20 meters and above, lower bands were still a question mark.



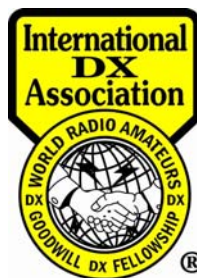
Hotel Menen would be our home for the duration of our stay on Nauru.

Our first duty was to get the ham license. The telecom office can be found in the airport terminal build-

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## Nauru 2012 (C21HA)—Out of the Way Island that's Really Way Out! (Con'd)

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ing, where Mr. Appi approved our activity immediately, confirmed the call sign and promised the license to be issued quite soon. Nevertheless, he was not in a hurry and we were not to receive our paper license until weeks later, so we were not able to complete LoTW certification until the last days of operation.



Next job was setting the station up. The system was similar to the previous one we used at YJ0HA. A special light weight base was made to hold the 12m spider-pole in the water. The pole hosted two antennas: a triangle tied to the far guy rope for the upper bands and a T-shape wire for 80 and 160m. Both antennas

led to the SGC 235 automatic tuner across a switching relay. The box with additional coil and capacitor was also clamped to the pole. We previously modified the coupler according to suggestions of TX3A team to make it to tolerate and dissipate higher levels of voltage and have a wider tuning range, especially on



the top band. Four twisted wires ran down to each base-leg from the coupler, resulting in a capacitive balance of the grounding component in order to reduce reactance of the coupler as an elemental part of it. It was mandatory because both vertical wires were of low impedance, yet we wanted the main current to work mostly on them, instead of any other part of the aerial system of the cable and ground/coupler. Fifty meters of RG58 coax and a tuner cable ran to the hotel room carefully secured against damage. We could not set up the BigIR ver-

tical for a second station because of the lost motor. As a chance we threw a spare wire up on a palm tree, making a long wire, a kind of inverted L. It was not an effective solution so *we were working only one station most of the time.*



Two IC-7000's with Micro Keyer II modems by Microham served us very well. The HL 1.1 (Tokyo-Hy-Power) SS amp gave 500 Watts out. There was reliable power around the island so our 7/24 supply was a benefit which is not so common on the Pacific isles. Our daily job included antenna maintenance, checking and replacing ropes, cleaning contacts, and switching antennas manually as the switching relay installed into the coupler interfered with the high voltage of the matching system. On the 11th of January, one and a half days after our arrival, the station was ready and we started to work eagerly.

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After a couple of CQs the band got full of life—a huge pileup grew and lasted one month.

We couldn't enjoy the first pleasures too long, however. The antenna system was set up at low-tide, but we didn't have experience with an open ocean setting. It was not a lagoon or bay at our doorstep—the closest land was about 13000 km across open seas! When the high tide was coming we recognized how high and rough the water and waves can be. The coupler and connectors at 2 meters high on the pole were covered by every wave. Even though it was more or less water resistant, the salty water frequently erased reception, and made short-cuts of our transmissions. Next day the pole was laid down and the coupler was moved higher. We played that game a day after too, so it got up to 3m on the pole. Please note we could approach the pole safely only twice a day (once at daytimes, once at nights during low tide) as big coral rocks near the pole were quite dangerous even in moderate water-levels



**Experience is a wonderful teacher! Up the pole goes our tuner box.**

of 1m or so.

Asia, Oceania, and USA were loud from the very first time, but we were not lucky with EU in the first 6 days—signals were low and fluttered. Also we suffered the equatorial noise on the low bands. Fortu-

nately this bad noise disappeared after a week, so we managed to work many station on 80m ever af-



ter, from every continent.

The triangle vertical performed amazingly again with pretty low radiation angle, in spite of the poor conditions (*low SFI, high A indexes, magnetic storms*). During mornings USA and JA was copied well from 17m to 10m, and EU was a daily routine on 20m and 17m every evening, always longpath. Our good rate was reduced with us frequently trying 15m, 12m, and 10m so we didn't miss the rare EU-



openings on upper bands.

We still can recall the most exciting occasion on 10m on 31 January, at 22:00z when S8 EU signals broke into the US pile all of a sudden! We then worked many Central-EU stations for 30 minutes, until they disappeared.

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## Nauru 2012 (C21HA)—Out of the Way Island that's Really Way Out! (Con'd)

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There was a big demand for 160m. It's always a hard job, and we seldom encountered reasonable propagation though we kept trying many sunsets and at nighttime. We were happy to complete 444 QSO's on top band including some EU. One hundred sixty meters was not our main goal so we asked patience from the callers because of the lack of any receiving antenna—being aware of the low rate—but we really tried to do the best. Many reported anyway to be happy with a new one in the log. Many thanks are due to AA7JV (TX3A) for modeling our low band T-vertical for us. It is easy to transport and install. We enjoyed this new experience, which is motivating us to pay more attention to the top band operation next time. We spent the first week on CW, but focused also on RTTY and SSB afterward, and were pleased to make some PSK and SSTV QSO's too.

Dining was complicated. There is only one shop on the island to buy water and beers. Some uninviting Chinese canteens can be found around, and a Chinese fellow opened a restaurant right in the hotel,



Above, a simple repetitive menu did not stimulate our palates. Below, "soup in a cup", just like our old student days, provided our culinary highlights!



but cooking was surely not his profession!

The cute barmaid was kind but she didn't seem to have any influence on the culinary staff. The instant soups we carried from home gave daily highlights as long as they lasted. We had one meal per day and it was enough under that climate and busy op-

erating schedule.

The people around seemed to be interested in our activity, but we could not be certain they really caught on to what we were



Pista lets a few visitors listen to the pileup.



about. The hotel's Board of Directors (see photo above) kindly invited us to give a presentation in one of their meetings to explain what on earth we were doing there.

They liked what we had talked about and revealed that some 30 years ago there had been active ama-

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## ***Nauru 2012 (C21HA)—Out of the Way Island that's Really Way Out! (Con'd)***

teur radio club with eight members in Nauru. The only known and licensed HAM today is Robin, C21RK. We met him, but he is no longer active in ham radio and has lacked equipment for decades. We also talked with educated people who showed some interest in ham radio operation. We not only showed them our station, but we also spent some time explaining radio operation and the technical basics of radio waves and propagation. On departing we left the pole, cables, wires, etc. for them.

Operating as a 'one station-two men' team we topped our former goal—making more than 32000 contacts, nearly 8000 to EU, and besides the huge NA and AS activity we logged many SA and OC.

We would like to say many thanks for all the calls and interest worldwide, for the support from the corporate sponsors, DX Clubs and Foundations, and for the support from individuals helping to making our trip possible. Last and not least, thanks to the people and place of Nauru, where we spent an unforgettable month.



### **The Final Tally**

<b>Band</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>AF</b>	0	0	7	10	45	28	31	12	2	135
<b>AN</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>AS</b>	135	599	1018	617	1412	1734	2379	856	568	9318
<b>EU</b>	12	210	740	377	3375	1530	1226	355	65	7890
<b>NA</b>	279	736	1000	457	656	1379	3873	2920	2134	13434
<b>OC</b>	18	48	71	69	193	112	234	72	77	894
<b>SA</b>	0	6	19	34	127	93	243	104	96	722
<b>Totals</b>	444	1599	2855	1564	5808	4876	7986	4319	2942	32393



## Recent Photo-Ops

Below: The recent *SEDCO/W4DXCC Conference* held in Pigeon Forge, TN provided a rare moment for a number of INDEXA officers and directors to meet face to face. Three new directors joining the Board recently are Jerry Rosalius (WB9Z), Gregg Marco (W6IZT) and Bob Schenck (N2OO).

Pictured (standing, left to right) are: Lynn Lamb (W4NL), Jerry Rosalius (WB9Z), Gregg Marco (W6IZT), Bob Allphin (K4UEE), Carl Smith (N4AA), and Bob Schenck (N2OO). Seated are John Scott (K8YC) and Gary Dixon (K4MQG).



Above: INDEXA Board Chairman Bob Allphin paid a visit to INDEXA member Arnfinn (Arnie) Kristoffersen (LA8CJ) recently while in Norway. Arnie has been a member of INDEXA since 1983, earning him membership number 19. Arnie was one of the first Vice Directors when INDEXA was founded.

While in Norway, Bob also visited Erling Wiig (LA6VM) who was one of Bob's team members while on Peter I Island (3Y0X) in 2006.

Bob was in Europe earning five slots in his "DX Foot Club" (DXFC) quest along with G4IRN and G3SXW. By "setting foot" in a DXCC entity it can be claimed as a "new one" for the DXFC. (See <http://www.dxfc.org> for details.)

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